Isolated wetland exemption and Wetland buffer exemption

Existing Regulation(s)	Proposed Amendment & Description
Current regulations allow for isolated wetlands less than 1,000 square feet to be exempted from the Wetland Development Standards of the SMC provided any impacts are mitigated pursuant to an approved mitigation plan.	Increase the wetland size exemption from avoidance seguencing for isolated wetlands from 1,000 to-2,500 square feet. Allow reduction of the buffer to 15-feet wide (plus 15 foot building setback) for low quality category III & IV wetlands under 4,000 square feet. Criteria for authorizing a reduced buffer would include: • Evaluation of whether or not the wetland was part of a wetland mosaic. • Habitat score of less than 15 (as opposed to 20 in item 3-19b). • Mitigation to include enhancement of remaining buffer/wetland or alternative high
	value area.
	 No further buffer averaging or reduction.
Desired Result of Amendment:	
The proposed amendments would revise the current	size limitation for being exempt from the avoidance
sequencing criteria for low quality isolated category I	II and IV wetlands from the current 1000 square feet
to 2500 square feet, a figure allosento/many peer juris	sdictions. The proposed amendments add further flexibility for

Amendment Source:

additional flexibility.

Staff

Best Available Science Support: Supported

Best Available Science Report "Wetlands" by AMEC Environment & Infrastructure, Inc.

Also, larger low quality wetlands (up to 4,000 square feet) would have either the standard buffer or a reduced buffer (to 15 feet plus a 15 foot building setback, total 30 ft) provided that lost buffer functions are mitigated on site and the remaining buffer or other high value area is enhanced. This will provide

Relevant Information (includes technical papers and/or references) (if applicable):

- Wetlands in Washington State, Volume 1: A Synthesis of the Science; Sections 5.3.3 and 5.3.4; Ecology Publication #05-06-006, March 2005.
- Wetlands and CAO Updates: Guidance for Small Cities, Western Washington Version; 1st revision July 2011; Ecology Publication #10-06-002.

Affected Code Section(s) (incudes duplicative and overlapping sections):

- 21A.50.320 Wetlands Limited exemption
- Possibly a new code section

Public Comment Reference(s):

33, 67-70, 84, 85, 88, 101, 105, 116, 182, 220



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Notes:		
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Ratings are either: large positive (P), small positive (p), neutral, large negative (N), small negative (n)				
Environmental	n	Implementation	Neutral	
 Decreased on-site protection of wetlands Decreased protection of public assets and resources (e.g. streets, water quality) Increased cumulative impacts to wetlands Increased effect on potential to restore damaged wetland buffer areas Increased chance of damage to wetlands Neutral potential to damage high quality, unique wetlands Some net loss of wetland functions and values The proposed amendment to increase the wetland exemption to 2,500 square feet would allow for more wetlands to fall under the exemption, thereby allowing more cumulative impacts and net loss of overall wetland functions and values. Although this amendment is not opposed by Department of Ecology, it is not based on BAS; it is suggested as a potential policy alternative for small municipalities. The additional allowance for wetland buffer modifications associated with type III and IV wetlands preserves and enhances the portion of the buffer area most important to the functions and values of small low value wetlands. 		 Neutral effect on clarity, neutral chance for unintended consequences Neutral effect on consistent, efficient implementation by the staff Neutral likelihood of support/approval by other agencies Decreased effective mitigation, easier to monitor The proposed amendment would have little impact on regulation clarity or on application review, although it may have some impact on the quantity of mitigation projects that must be reviewed and tracked by the city. 		
Property	Р	Overal	l Effect	
 Increased flexibility and options for property owner's use of property Neutral predictability for permit applicants and neighbors Increased recognition of site improvements and existing uses in standards Neutral expense / more time The proposed amendment to increase the wetland exemption to 2,500 square feet would offer greater flexibility for applicants seeking to develop sites constrained by an isolated wetland. It would not affect predictability. The property owner might incur a greater cost as a result of the critical areas study, but in return would have greater flexibility in property use. The additional allowance for wetland buffer modifications associated with type III and IV wetlands up to 4,000 square feet would further increase flexibility for property owners with relatively small low value wetland areas. 		Posi	itive	

RENTON MUNICIPAL CODE 4-3-090 SHORELINE MASTER PROGRAM REGULATIONS—D2b:

- Category III and IV wetlands and buffers between one thousand (1,000) and four thousand in a wetland mitigation plan: (4,000) square feet may be displaced provided that all of the following criteria are documented
- The wetland does not score twenty (20) points or greater for habitat in the 2004 Western Washington Rating System;
- 2) The wetland is depressional and is recharged only by precipitation, interflow or groundwater and adjacent development cannot assure a source of recharge to maintain its hydrologic character through stormwater infiltration, or other means;
- ω The wetlands does not have a potential to reduce flooding or erosion or has the potential the applicable criteria of the Wetland Rating Form for Western Washington; to maintain or improve water quality as evidenced by a score of at least ten (10) points on
- The total area of the combined wetland and buffer is ten thousand (10,000) square feet or
- It does not achieve a score of at least twenty (20) points on the Habitat Functions criteria of the Wetland Rating Form for Western Washington; and
- $\overline{\omega}$ complex without interruption by roads, paved areas or buildings within fifty feet (50'). space buffer sufficient to allow movement of terrestrial wildlife to and from the wetland and buffer The wetland and buffer is not connected to a larger space complex which may include, but is not limited to a stream buffer, a buffer associated with a geological hazard, or other designated open
- Impacts of displaced wetlands are mitigated pursuant to subsection x, below